



# Rare Animals of Louisiana

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## Black Pine Snake

*Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi*

Federal Status: Candidate

**RarityRank:** SX / G4T3

### Identification:

- A very long snake, entirely black or dark brown on back and belly
- Sometimes light white blotches around tail, throat, and belly
- The pupils are round
- The snout is somewhat pointed and covered by a large triangular scale
- Juveniles are dark toward the head, patterned toward the tail, and have pink to tan bellies
- Adult: 42-64 inches, the record is 89 inches



Photo by S. Reichling

### Habitat:

- Sandy, well drained soils
- Upland longleaf pine forests

**Food habits:** The Black pine snake is a powerful constrictor, feeding primarily on pocket gophers but also other small mammals, birds, and bird eggs.

### Reproduction:

- Mating begins in April and extends through June; Females lay 1-24 eggs in burrows 1-2 months after copulation
- Eggs are laid in soft sand under rocks, in abandoned gopher burrows, or in burrows constructed by the female
- The oval eggs have leathery shells and often stick together.
- Young hatch in August and September

### Threats:

- Most of the historical habitat has been lost through land use conversion, including urban development and conversion to agriculture and pine plantations
- Remaining patches of suitable habitat on private land are fragmented, degraded, and contain second-growth forests
- Fire suppression
- Vehicle mortality



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## ***Beneficial Management Practices:***

- Prescribed burning, thinning, and longleaf pine restoration
- Continue research in order to gain more information on population numbers, range, habitat, behavior and management requirements

## ***U. S. Range:*** AL, LA, MS

- Small fragmented range in Alabama and Mississippi
- Extirpated from Louisiana



## ***References***

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